



For Immediate Release
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Study of Children's Exposure to Persistent Pollutants to Begin in North Carolina

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Research Triangle Park, NC.....To better understand how young children may get exposed to persistent pollutants including pesticides, and what type of activities might influence exposure, scientists at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's National Exposure Research Laboratory in Research Triangle Park, NC, are beginning a three-year pilot study of preschool children in North Carolina and Ohio.

Preschool children are thought to have more frequent contact with pesticides and other pollutants than older children or adults because of what they eat and drink, where they spend their time and what they do. There is concern that children may be more sensitive to the toxic effects of some chemicals found in or on lawns, carpets, toys, furniture and many other items. As a result, there is a need to know whether and how exposure may be occurring.

The study will involve about 260 children between 18 months and 5 years of age at participating day care centers and residential settings. North Carolina day care centers are being sought to participate in the study. The study will begin this summer in North Carolina in the counties of Buncombe, Durham, Edgecombe, Jones, Lee, and Mecklenburg and in Ohio in 2001. This is a pilot study, meaning further research on children will be needed to develop conclusions that can be applied to the population as a whole.

Children who stay at home with an adult caregiver and attend preschool or day care in the selected counties may be eligible to participate in the voluntary study. Families who enroll in the study will be asked to provide samples of food and beverages consumed by their child and the adult caregiver during a two-day period. Scientists will also collect samples of indoor and outdoor air; urine and hand wipe samples from the child and adult; and samples of dust and play area soil. The study has been endorsed by the National Head Start Association, the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services Division of Child Development, and several local child service agencies, including Durham's Operation Breakthrough, Inc. and Johnston-Lee Community Action, Inc.

The EPA has been directed under the Food Quality Protection Act and the Safe Drinking Water Act of 1996 to give special attention to protecting children from environmental health risks. In response, the EPA's Office of Research and Development in the Research Triangle Park, NC, is conducting research to fill in the gaps in understanding about how children are exposed to environmental contaminants, what the health effects are and how to assess risks to children.

For further information on the exposure study, please contact Ann Brown in EPA's Office of Research and Development, 919-541-7818.

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